

## **FORGIVEN Session 2: An Encounter with Mercy**

God loves us right where we are, but He loves us too much to leave us there. In this session we will look more closely at God's invitation to encounter His mercy and healing in a very real and tangible way.

1. Can you describe a time when you were very aware of the presence of God with you?
2. Who is someone that has helped you most in life?

*"In her motherly care, the Church grants us the mercy of God which prevails over all our sins and is especially at work in the sacrament of reconciliation." — CCC 2040*

### **Session Objectives**

- *Recognize that God is love, and His mercy comes from His tremendous love for us.*
- *Understand that we encounter Christ himself in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.*
- *Trust that God wants to heal the root causes of our sin in Confession.*
- *Be strengthened by knowing that the sacrament gives us powerful grace to battle temptation and sin.*

### **Video:**

#### **I. Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8)**

- A. What was she feeling?**
- B. Unexpected encounter with God's love and mercy**
  1. Jesus did not condemn her
  2. He also did not condone her sins
- C. God sees us as we are and loves us**
- D. Confession offers a new beginning**
  1. We are not our sins
  2. Mercy invites us to a much greater life

#### **II. God's Mercy**

- A. God is merciful**
- B. God is constantly seeking us out -**
- C. We encounter Jesus himself in the Sacrament of Reconciliation**
- D. Jesus gave the Apostles his own authority and power to forgive sins**
  1. God has always used mediators
  2. The priest acts in the Person of Christ the Head

#### **III. Human Aspect of the Sacrament**

- A. God knows we need a tangible experience of mercy and forgiveness**
- B. Confession gives us a physical encounter along with the supernatural reality of grace**
- C. We have a human need to say that we're sorry**
- D. We have a human need to actually hear someone say that we are forgiven**

#### **IV. Healing**

- A. In Confession Jesus forgives our sins**
- B. He also wants to address the root causes of our sin and heal the wounds of sin in our soul**
- C. The Sacrament gives us the grace to "go and sin no more"**
- D. God offers us his mercy so that we can extend his mercy to the world**

#### **Questions to Ponder:**

1. Did you ever have an experience where you were being condemned by others but not necessarily adultery?
2. Holiness and sin have an inverse relationship. As one increases, the other decreases. That being said, it was common for many of the saints to go to Confession frequently. For example, Pope St. John Paul II and St. Teresa of Calcutta are known to have gone to Confession once a week. How do we explain this apparent contradiction?
3. In Confession, why does the priest say, "I absolve you of your sin" and not "God absolves you of your sin"?
4. How do you feel about being cleansed in confession?"

#### **WRAP-UP:**

Here are the key points participants should take away from this session:

1. Confession is more than just a place to get absolution for our sins—it is an encounter with God's mercy.
2. In this sacrament God not only forgives us, but he also heals our wounds and the root causes of our sins.
3. It is Christ himself whom we encounter in the Sacrament of Reconciliation—the priest is acting in the Person of Christ the Head and forgiveness comes from the power and authority of Jesus.
4. The Mission of Jesus is Mercy, to seek those who have made mistakes. Who are broken and do not know His Love, and who have turned away from Him. He is seeking you out today, inviting you back to Him. He is longing for you.

#### **For Further Study**

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1440-1445 John 8:1-11
- Michael E. Gaitley MIC, *The Second Greatest Story Ever Told: Now Is the Time of Mercy* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2015)
- Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy* (New York: Random House, 2016)
- Pope St. John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980)
- St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Diary: Divine Mercy in My Soul* (Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press: 2005)
- FORMED Audio Talks:
  - Scott Hahn, *The Healing Power of Confession*
  - Father Larry Richards, *Confession*

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### **Reflections:**

- I. The story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:2–11 presents us with a beautiful image of the mercy and grace offered to us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Open your Bible and Read through John 8:2–11 passage slowly and prayerfully.

Then Imagine yourself in this passage.

- Have you ever felt like this woman: caught in your sins, accused by others, condemning yourself for mistakes you've made?
  - What might she have been thinking and feeling when the scribes and Pharisees brought her before Jesus to make their point?
  - How do you think she felt when everyone else left and she was left alone with Jesus?
  - What may have gone through her mind when she heard his words, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again"?
- II. Jesus rescues this woman in two ways. He forgives rather than condemns her, but He also silences her accusers. The forgiveness we receive in Confession reconciles us with God, but it also means there is no longer anything for the accuser, Satan, to hold over us. And it also means that we no longer need to accuse ourselves for our sins.

They are washed away, and we are free. In place of our guilt God gives us His healing grace. Mercy makes us free to love. God offers us His mercy so that we, in turn, can offer His mercy to a world desperately in need.

- Take a few moments to prayerfully reflect on the ways God has shown you His mercy.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one person to whom you can extend God's mercy. This may be someone who has wronged you, someone who needs to hear the message of God's mercy, someone in need of a kind, encouraging word, etc.
- What concrete thing can you do to share God's mercy with this person?